

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 00191 101748Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 IO-13
/071 W

-----101756Z 125590 /47

O R 101714Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1254
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 191

E..9. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, ZF, PINT, MOPS
SUBJECT: COLLECTION OF HEAVY WEAPONS IN LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 0096

1. DISCUSSED ANNOUNCEMENT BY "QUADRUPARTITE COMMITTEE"
(REFTEL) SETTING JANUARY 12 DEADLINE FOR COLLECTION OF
HEAVY WEAPONS AND FOR PALESTINIAN
REGULAR FORCES TO LEAVE
COUNTRY WITH COS SHIHABI JANUARY 10. ASKED SHIHABI WHICH
ELEMENT HAD BEEN MOST ACTIVE IN PUSHING FOR THIS ANNOUNCE-
MENT. HE REPLIED IMMEDIATELY, SYRIA. DAMASCUS, HE SAID,
WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE EXTENSIVE DELAY IN BEGINNING
WEAPONS COLLECTION. HE ANTICIPATES EACH ELEMENT WILL
FURNISH LIST OF WEAPONS IT CONTROLS BY THE JANUARY 12
DEADLINE AND "EVERY LIST WILL BE A TIE." SYRIA, HOWEVER,
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KNOWS WHERE AT LEAST 80 PERCENT OF THE WEAPONS ARE
ALREADY HIDDEN AND PLANS BEGIN A WIDE-SPREAD ARMS SWEEP
UP
JANUARY 13. HE UNABLE PREDICT THE TIME WHICH
WILL BE REQUIRED TO FINISH THE OPERATION BUT INCLINED
BELIEVE THAT WHILE IT WILL INVOLVE SOME FIGHTING, THE
ACTUAL CONFLICT WILL BE LIMITED AND ADF, I.E.,

SYRIA, WILL PREVAIL. HE STRESSED SYRIAN DETERMINATION TO CRACK WHATEVER HEADS MAY BE NECESSARY IN THE PROCESS.

2. CONCERNING THE PALESTINIAN "REGULAR FORCES," SHIHABI SAID THIS PART OF ANNOUNCEMENT WAS DIRECTED AT THE REMNANTS OF PLA'S QADISIYYA AND HITTIN BRIGADES WHICH HAD DEFECTED TO ARAFAT AND THE REJECTIONISTS LAST SUMMER. HE ESTIMATED NUMBERS INVOLVED TO BE BETWEEN 150-250 OFFICERS AND MEN. THE ANNOUNCEMENT ALSO INTENDED COVER THOSE ELEMENTS REMAINING IN LEBANON OF THE AIN JALLUT BRIGADE WHICH MUST NOW RETURN TO EGYPT. (HE DID NOT HAVE FIGURE IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE ON NUMBER INVOLVED.) FINALLY, HE SAID, THE REFERENCE WAS TO THOSE "IRAQI REGULARS" NUMBERING ABOUT 900-1,200 STILL IN LEBANON.

3. ASKED WHERE THE QADISIYYA/HITTIN ELEMENTS WERE EXPECTED TO GO, THE GENERAL SMILED THINLY AND SAID "WE HAVE TOLD THEM THEY ARE WELCOME IN DAMASCUS BUT ASSUME THEY WILL GO TO BAGHDAD.

4. SHIHABI MADE CLEAR THAT THE JANUARY 12 DEADLINE IS CONCEIVED AS THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS NOT THE COMPLETION.

5. COMMENT:

OTHERS MAY FEAR SYRIAN ACTIONS ARE WEAKENING SARKIS BY MOVING TOO FAST AND MAKING HIM APPEAR A PUPPET. TOP SARG COMMAND, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, CLEARLY BELIEVES SARKIS' INABILITY TO START HEAVY WEAPONS COLLECTION RISKS FURTHER DESTABILIZATION IN LEBANON. THIS WE BELIEVE TO HAVE BEEN OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION PROMPTING THIS LATEST SYRIAN INITIATIVE.

MURPHY

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